

what is

THE BIO-PACK?

families

letter

the bio-pack

FIRST RESPONDER

PUBLIC HEALTH

DOXYCYCLINE

HOW TO ADDRESS FIRST RESPONDER FAMILIES

As law enforcement, fire and rescue personnel respond to emergencies, the safety of their loved ones are always in the forefront of their mind. During a public health event this is even more of a concern because first responders may need to be away from their families for an extended period of time. And, depending on the type of emergency, first responders may not even be able to communicate with their families.



So, to ensure a ready and focused workforce, one that can fulfill its obligations and responsibilities during times of stress, it's important for public health agencies to address this issue up front and in collaboration with the first responder communities.



“Some people say, “Oh, there’s never going to be a biological attack.” Maybe not, but some kind of biological incident will happen. It already has. And next time we want to be even better prepared.”

— Carol, Senior Nurse Administrator

a local perspective

Montgomery County, Maryland addresses this issue through an innovative approach to provide priority assistance to first responder families.

- During the Bio-Pack orientation the county provides first responders with a letter from the local public health officer.
- This letter is addressed to local area doctors and identifies the first responder’s spouse, children, or others that they designate, as members of a first responder’s family. The letter asks the doctor to provide this first responder family member with an antibiotic prescription that can be filled at the time of a biological event.
- First responders are told to have their family member take the letter to their primary health care provider.
- Families can also choose to go to clinics that will be set up for the general public during a public health emergency.



“This is not a drill. This is not a simulation. A bio-emergency is going to happen. And you need to be protected. We have to count on you.”

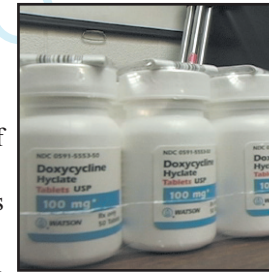
— Jim, First Responder Captain

PROGRAM OUTLINE

the Bio-Pack

Each Bio-Pack contains:

- an individually labeled bottle of doxycycline,
- a directive from each agency’s commanding officer,
- patient information on doxycycline, and
- specific information on storage and use.



Award Winner: In 2003, Montgomery County was awarded a 2003 Achievement Award for its Bio-Pack Program by the National Association of Counties (NACo). The award was presented in recognition of an innovative program which contributed and enhanced country government in the United States.



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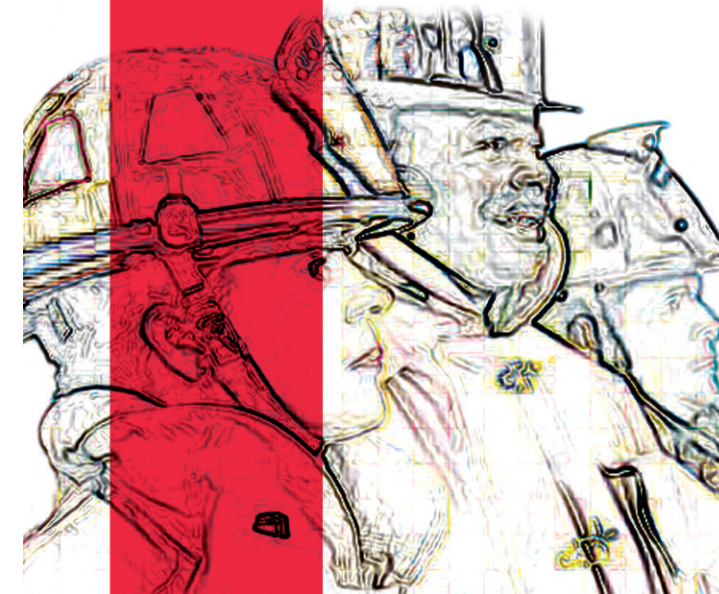
Ready

Public Health Emergency
Preparedness and Response
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD
Plan to be safe.

BIO-pack

PREPOSITIONING
MEDICATION FOR
First
Responders

A Guide for Local
Public Health Agencies



educating
FIRST RESPONDERS

WHY PREPOSITIONING MEDICATION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS IS KEY

helps to prepare a ready workforce

Traditional first responders (fire, rescue, and law enforcement) deal with danger every day. However, a biological emergency poses a different type of threat, and public health needs a ready first responder workforce. Prepositioning medications with first responders is one way to help prepare a ready workforce.



prevents delays in response time

It is vital that any delays in responding to an event are avoided in public health emergency. The Bio-Pack program—developed by Montgomery County, Maryland Public Health Services—prepositions medications with first responders to provide the protection they need to safely respond to a public health emergency in a timely manner. Each first responder is given two bio-packs, one to keep at home, the other at work. The biopacks contain doxycycline, a common antibiotic.



“We need to make sure that first responders report to work if there’s a declared emergency and so we want to get their their medications in advance.”

— County Health Officer

presenting the Bio-Pack

The program orientation is as follows:

1. The Bio-Pack video is shown to provide a general overview of the Bio-Pack.
2. Each first responder is required to fill out a medical screening form.
3. Once the form is completed, each first responder will meet with a public health nurse.
4. The nurse performs the following:
 - reviews the screening form for contra-indications,
 - explains the Bio-Pack,
 - clarifies dosage information,
 - answers questions or concerns, and
 - dispenses the doxycycline, with guidance from a licensed pharmacist.
5. The first responder then signs the consent form acknowledging that he or she is now in custody of the medication, one for home and one for work.



“We’re the front lines and more than likely in a biological incident, some of us are going to be exposed. So we need to be prepared for any eventuality.”

— Bob, First Responder

logistics
PLANNING

CONSIDERATIONS IN PREPOSITIONING MEDICATIONS

logistics & planning

Some of the logistical items public health agencies may need to consider are:

- medical screening forms,
- consent forms,
- public health official’s standing orders,
- instructions of when and how to use the medication,
- guidance on how and where to store the medication at work and at home, and
- training of nurses for the clinic.



Other planning issues:

- When and where will first responders receive their Bio-Pack?
- How will first responders be accommodated who are not working a daytime shift?
- What about costs and logistics associated with overtime?
- Where will the nursing and pharmacy staff come from needed to screen, counsel, and dispense medication to each first responder?
- How will the collection and storage of medical records be organized?
- Will copies of medical records be kept?
- Who will have access to the medical records?

“I feel it’s a good idea that they are giving out the medication so that we will be able to help people and still be able to keep our own health.”

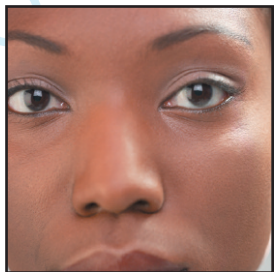
— Anna, First Responder

costs
ADMINISTRATION

administration and costs

Some things for public health agencies to consider:

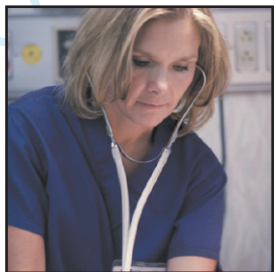
- Who will develop and administer the Bio-Pack program?
- Who will provide the funding for the program?
- What are the projected program costs?
- How will the program be sustained?
- Where will the funds come from?



management of medications

What type of tracking system will be in place to address these issues?

- Who has received the medication?
- When did they receive it?
- When does it expire?
- What is the procedure to replace medication?



“I’ve got one bio-pack at home and another one at work. So I’m ready and that’s great. One less thing to worry about if something happens.”

— Geoffrey, First Responder